

CITY OF OAKLAND  
**OAKLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**SURVEILLANCE IMPACT STATEMENT FOR  
WILDFIRE DISTRICT AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTIONS**

**Information Describing the Technology and How It Works**

The Oakland Fire Department (OFD) is transitioning to a new inspection and permitting database called Accela which has been used by the Planning and Building Department for several years. This transition involves moving from paper/pen documentation to compiling inspection data with electronic devices (iPads and iPhones). An essential piece of this conversion includes the documentation of inspections with photo images collected with electronic devices. By capturing images of the property/site at the time of inspection, OFD can document Compliance or Non-Compliance, ensure inspections are completed in accordance to inspection requirements, respond to complaints, use photos for inspection training and provide transparent inspection data to registered property owners and their authorized agents.

Digital images of the inspection site and status at the time of the inspection allows OFD to compile an accurate account of the inspection details. This information can then be reviewed to ensure quality inspection and training; and give a transparent account of the inspection. In combination with the use of the citizen facing portal called ACA (Accela Citizen Access), a registered user can access the record details in the Accela database. This project is a complete renovation of the current manual inspection system to the use of new software and hardware to document inspection details with real time data. The technology will provide clearer documentation of the inspections completed. It also allows inspection documentation to take place much more quickly and be linked to other vital information about the property through the Accela system.

**Locations Where, and Situations in which the Technology May Be Deployed**

OFD began using the technology in May of 2018 to process vegetation inspections in the Wildfire Protection areas of Oakland (predominantly in the hills above Highway 580). These inspections are completed by firefighters and vegetation inspectors on an annual basis. The technology was deployed out of the Fire Marshal's office with joint staff from the Fire Prevention Bureau and Fire Department command staff. The technology is used daily by the engine company staff or inspectors from the Fire Prevention Bureau.

OFD is in the process of converting all of its fire inspections to the Accela system which will mean that any code, commercial, or other type of inspection will be tracked and stored in this system. This will create efficiencies that will improve fire safety citywide by allowing for more inspections to occur on an annual basis and will help identify problem properties where an elevated fire hazard may exist. Fire Department personnel including but not limited to firefighters and inspectors will be involved in deployment and use of the technology.

**Potential Impact on Civil Liberties & Privacy**

The technology may collect information that is personal in nature and digital images of property

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that is not typically seen from normal street views. Photos taken during inspections will include images taken in and around a building or residence; and vacant lots. This information will be stored in the Accela database to document the inspections completed by the Fire Department.

**Mitigations**

Access to this data is limited to users with active credentials in Accela and verified property owners and their authorized agents through ACA. All data collected will be stored in the Accela database. All departments using the Accela database will have limited access, dependent on credentials, to each department's dataset. Access is limited to users with active credentials and there is regular review of users by departmental administrators.

ACA registration process includes a verification of the applicant against the assessor record to ensure only the property owner or their agent can have access to the stored photos.

**Data Types and Sources**

The CityGov app has been loaded onto each device and is used to collect data and images during the inspections. This application is helpful in that it can capture the data, even when an inspector's tablet is not connected to the internet as is often the case in remote areas of the Wildfire Prevention District. The inspector will use the CityGov app to go through the associated checklist and enter the data or take photos. The CityGov app processes the checklist entries to determine the inspection result. The results and photos are uploaded into Accela. The Accela database will store all the data collected. The information is processed and digitally sent to the Accela database. The CityGov app does not store any of the data collected, once the data is sent to Accela, the data collected cannot be accessed on the CityGov app.

The Accela system does allow Data Sharing with other City Departments (primarily Building and Planning) with access to the Accela Information and digital images are collected by

**Data Security**

Data collected for ACA registration is not stored or printed. Once authorization for access has been reviewed and granted or denied, the information is deleted. The City operates "secure data networks" protected by industry standard firewalls and password protection systems. Only authorized individuals have access to the information provided by our users.

Data collected for inspection purposes are stored in the Accela database. This information is kept indefinitely as archival information that may be retrieved for future inspection reports or inspection review. Only person(s) with an active user credential can access the data. The Accela database also has a visible audit log to track changes to the inspection checklist and record. The log documents user, date, time of access and what was changed. The log is visible to all users but cannot be altered or changed.

Accela is a FISMA-NIST (Federal Information Security Management Act--National Institute of Standards and Technology) compliant provider and incorporates security and privacy into

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the framework of their cloud-based government solutions.

**Fiscal Cost**

The set-up cost for this technology was \$414,000, including the full build-out. The savings in staff efficiencies by accelerating the number of inspections that can be conducted on a daily basis has not been calculated at this time.

**Third Party Dependence**

Other City departments using the Accela database or individuals that have been given Accela credentials will have access to Fire records. As citywide direction to move toward interdepartmental transparency, departments using Accela have read-only access to all other department records in Accela that are not of a sensitive nature.

**Alternatives Considered**

Non-Surveillance technology was used for many years during these inspections but could not accurately document the status of property at the time of the inspection. This led to misunderstandings for property owners about what needed to be mitigated on their property which had the potential to lead to fines charged for re-inspection of non-compliant properties. Additionally, auditing of the quality of inspections was difficult as there was no photographic record of what the inspector witnessed for a supervisor to review without visiting the property. Inputting records into a desktop, sometimes hours after an inspection occurred, also created inefficiencies in the processing of inspection results, bills for re-inspection being sent late, or non-compliant owners being overlooked causing an increase in fire hazards.

**Track Record of Other Entities**

In researching different Automated Inspection Systems, OFD reviewed other jurisdictions and systems and found the system that Roseville, CA used was the most promising. An added benefit was the fact that the City already has Accela in place in the Planning and Building Department. During the build-out phase, OFD found that certain features of Accela limited its effectiveness in the field, in particular when there was no internet connection. The CityGov application on top of the Accela database fixed many of those user problems creating efficiency.

Questions or comments concerning the Collection and Use of Digital Images for Wildfire District and Fire Safety Inspections should be directed to the Assistant Fire Marshal, Emmanuel Watson via e-mail to [ewatson@oaklandca.gov](mailto:ewatson@oaklandca.gov) or phone at (510) 238-6559.